

# Gusii language

The **Gusii language** (also known **Ekegusii**) is a Bantu language spoken in Kisii and Nyamira counties in western Kenya, whose headquarters is Kisii town, (between the Kavirondo Gulf of Lake Victoria and the border with Tanzania). It is spoken natively by 2.2 million people (as of 2009), mostly among the Abagusii.

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## Sounds

### Vowels

Gusii has seven vowels. Vowel length is contrastive, i.e. the words 'bór' *to miss* and 'bóór' *to say* are distinguished by vowel length only.

Phonetic inventory of vowels in Gusii			
	Front	Central	Back
<span>Close</span>	<span>i</span>	<span></span>	<span>u</span>
<span>Near-close</span>	<span>e</span>	<span></span>	<span>o</span>
<span>Open-mid</span>	<span>ɛ</span>	<span></span>	<span>ɔ</span>
<span>Open</span>	<span></span>	<span>a</span>	<span></span>

### Consonants

In the table below, orthographic symbols are included between brackets if they differ from the IPA symbols. Note especially the use of ‘y’ for IPA /j/, common in African orthographies. When symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant.

Phonetic inventory of consonants in Gusii				
	bilabial	alveo-palatal	palatal	velar
<span>plosive</span>	<span>p</span> <span>b</span>	<span>t</span>	<span>c</span> ( <span>c</span> )	<span>k</span> <span>g</span>
<span>fricative</span>	<span></span>	<span>s</span>	<span></span>	<span></span>
<span>affricate</span>	<span></span>	<span></span>	<span>cç</span> ( <span>c</span> )	<span></span>
<span>nasal</span>	<span>m</span>	<span>n</span>	<span>ɲ</span> ( <span>ny</span> )	<span>ŋ</span> ( <span>ng'</span> )
<span>trill</span>	<span></span>	<span>r</span>	<span></span>	<span></span>
<span>approximant</span>	<span>w</span>	<span></span>	<span>j</span> ( <span>y</span> )	<span></span>

The following morphophonological alternations occur:

- n+r = nd
- n+b = mb
- n+g = ŋg
- n+k = ŋk
- n+m = m:

The gusii language has the consonant ' b' not realized as the bilabial stop as in 'bat' but as bilabial fricative as in words like baba, baminto, abana.

## Ekegusii language Alphabet

Gusii	
<i>Ekegusii</i>	
Native to	Kenya
Region	Western Kenya, Kisii County & Nyamira County
<div>Native speakers</div>	2.2 million (2009 census) <sup>[1]</sup> 0.5 million
<div><span>Language family</span></div>	<div>Niger–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li> Atlantic-Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Volta-Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Benue–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bantoid<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Southern Bantoid<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Northeast Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Great Lakes Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Logooli–Kuria (E.40)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Gusii</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></div>
Dialects	Ekegusii ProperGirango MaateBonchari/Bunchari
Writing system	Latin, Arabic
Language codes	
<span>ISO 639-3</span>	guz
Glottolog	gusi1247 <span> </span> (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/gusi1247) <sup>[2]</sup>
Guthrie code	JE.42 <sup>[3]</sup>

	Ekegusii alphabet (Kenya) <sup>[4][5][6]</sup>																							
Ekegusii Alphabet	A	B	C	D	E	Ē	G	H	I	K	M	N	O	Ö	R	S	T	U	W	Y	-	-	-	-
Ekegusii Consonants	Mb	Bw	mbw	Ch	Nch	Chw	Nchw	Nd	Ndw	Ng	Gw	Ngw	Ng'	Ng'w	Ny	Nyw	Nk	Kw	Nkw	Mw	Nw	Rw	Ns	Sw

## Examples of Ekegusii words

English - Ekegusii

- Good morning - Bwakire buya
- Goodnight - Obotuko obuya
- One - eyemo
- Two - Ibere
- Five - Isano
- Nine - Kianda
- Twenty - Emerongo ebere
- Ten - Ikomi
- Head - Omotwe
- Ear - Ogoto
- Water - Amache
- Earth - Ense
- Dwell - Menya
- Homeland - Inka
- Today - Rero
- Sun - Risase
- Dog - Esese
- Red - Embariri
- Stand - Tenena
- Know - Manya
- See - Rora
- Upside/Northern/Hillside - Rogoro
- Lake/Sea - Enyancha
- Desert - Eroro
- Fighter - Omorwani
- Roll over - Garagara
- Milk - Amabere
- She Goat - Esibeni
- Cowdung - Esike
- Lady - Omosubati

## Bibliography

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## See also

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- [Languages of Kenya](#)

## References

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2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Gusii" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/gusi1247>). *Glottolog* 3.0. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Jouni Filip Maho, 2009. [New Updated Guthrie List Online](https://web.archive.org/web/20180203191542/http://goto.glocalnet.net/mahopapers/nuglonline.pdf) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180203191542/http://goto.glocalnet.net/mahopapers/nuglonline.pdf>)
4. Rhonda L. Hartell, ed. 1993. *The Alphabets of Africa*. Dakar: UNESCO and Summer Institute of Linguistics
5. Nyauma, Shem (2014). "A Phonological Reconstruction Of Ekegusii And Egekuria Nouns: A Comparative Analysis" ([http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/99544/Nyauma\\_A%20Phonological%20Reconstruction%20of%20Ekegusii%20and%20Egekuria%20Nouns-a%20Comparative%20Analysis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/99544/Nyauma_A%20Phonological%20Reconstruction%20of%20Ekegusii%20and%20Egekuria%20Nouns-a%20Comparative%20Analysis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)) (PDF). *Masters Thesis, University of Nairobi*.
6. Hartell, Rhonda, ed. (1993). *Alphabets of Africa*. [https://archive.org/details/rosettaproject\\_kuj\\_ortho-1](https://archive.org/details/rosettaproject_kuj_ortho-1): UNESCO Regional Office in Dakar (BREDa). p. 186. ISBN 92-9091-020-3.

## External links

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- Gusii.com (<http://www.gusii.com>) The Gusii Language Blog
- Ekegusii Encyclopedic Project (<http://www.suttonelms.org.uk/ekegusii2.html>) & online Encyclopedia/Dictionary (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110207212728/http://www.ekegusiiencyclopedia.com/Ensaki/>)
- American soft power has helped this Kenyan man's efforts to ensure a future for his mother tongue (<https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-01-25/american-soft-power-has-helped-kenyan-mans-efforts-ensure-future-his-mother>)—report by Patrick Cox for [Public Radio International](#) (January 26, 2017)

## Listening

- National Public Radio story about Kisii language (<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5371609>) (from *All Things Considered* program, April 29, 2006)

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